



Fire & Ice

A new look and understanding of the Pantheon of Northwest European Aesir & Vanir Deities and the complex Cosmology through which they move

ABSTRACT

The Author draws upon his considerable and unique knowledge of the Gods & Goddesses of the Scandinavian & Germanic peoples of pre-Christian Europe to illuminate and expand upon the limited understanding of the Deities of the Aesir & Vanir; and the complexities and nuances of their Identities, positions, and roles...

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Chapter XIII

THE FIRST

OF FEUDS:

What Causes

Brought the Aesir & Vanir

to War?

The reader of the Voluspa is informed of a great war fought between Aesir & Vanir. What is not specifically explained, are those reasons which ultimately led the gods to this war. We are, however, given fragments that indicate possible motives:

23

Then gathered together the gods for counsel,
The Holy Hosts, and held converse:
Should the Aesir a truce with tribute purchase,
Or should all gods share in the feast.

24

His spear had Odin sped over the host:
The first of feuds was thus fought in the world;
Was broken in battle the breast of Asgard,
Fighting Vanir trod the field of battle.

We know from the first line of stanza 23 that the gods of the Aesir and Vanir met for a tribal “counsel;” the purpose of this was undoubtedly of great importance... We also know from the second line of said stanza that there was “converse,” or, more specifically, a serious discussion between high-ranking “Holy Hosts...” This indicates a conversation which was of a somber nature that held immense gravity. We are then given a clue as to the purpose of such a weighty counsel, and why it was being convened [lines three and four]—this was a discussion as to whether the Aesir, under the leadership of Odin, should “purchase” a “tribute,” or “share in the feast.”

First, what can the reader imply about the Aesir paying a tribute? Ancient (and even modern) Indo-European law called for payment of a price [fines] for infractions against members of the tribe or community¹. Therefore, this discussion pertained to a violation of the Laws of Aesir & Vanir [Asgard generally]. Secondly, we can presume that the violation committed (specifically, by Odin; generally, by the Aesir) was so severe, that the Vanir went so far as to demand a “share in the feast”².

The student of the Voluspa then must determine what grievous violation of the “Holy” Law might have been committed by the Allfather to cause such a “Feud?” The evidence available for such a determination will be found in the lore of the Edda itself... What is known are three specific exploits—committed by Odin—which may have most likely offended the Vanir: Odin’s acquisition of magic/seid (which was, until that point, an exclusive province of the Vanir), his blood-bound oath of fealty with Loki (an adversarial Jotun/Ettin half-breed; also an unrepentant, repeated cause of war, strife & abuse for Vanir/Aesir alike—even the source of murder, in the case of Baldur; the cause of abduction, in the case of Freya³); or Wotan’s abuse/misuse of magic/seid (for his own personal gratification)...

Within this hypothesis, I propose that it was likely the consequence [in diverse degrees of severity] of all three wrongdoings!

At this point, a contemporaneous summary of Allfather’s transgressions as Lord of Aesir & Holy Hosts of Asgard, should be given (as though being prosecuted by the Van):

- (1) Odin entered an all-binding, sacred pact of “blood brotherhood” with Loki; Loki belonging to an enemy Jotun/Ettin race—belonging to neither Aesir, nor Vanir royalty... Through this sacred alliance of blood-kinship with Odin, Loki was allowed entry into the company of Asgard gods—even into their sacred halls—and in so doing granted Loki the opportunity to cause theft from, abduction of, wars against/within, insult to and abuse of [and even murder of one of] the members of the High Assembly of gods...
- (2) Loki, under safeguard of Allfather, committed transgressions of Argir (devious crimes against nature), which resulted in the creation of monstrous, avowed enemies [e.g., Fenrir] of the assembly of Asgard gods...

(3) Wotan acquired mystical/magical secrets (of Seid & charms/spells) for himself, likely through methods that were the explicit province of the Vanir; and most probably without sanction of the Van...

(4) Odin used the very same acquired charms/magic for purposes of deceit and sexual offense⁴ [likely, the most terrible of transgressions] against maidens of Jotun-kind (behavior much more analogous to that of Loki's, rather than that of the ruler of Asgard)...

We know that the gods held counsel, we have an idea of the issue at hand: our king violated our laws—he is not fit to rule... the Van insisted it was their turn to select a ruler more fit to rule... the converse became heated—Odin, in a fit threw his spear between the arguing sides, landing it at the end of the hall (most likely Yggdrasill)... there the spear sat... a declaration of the leader of the As... *NO MORE TALKING*—we settle this by combat!!! We know from heathen ritual that those who endure Trial by Combat will be redeemed by the outcome... the Van won... but in their love of Aesir and all Nine Realms, decided to be magnanimous... that there would be a co-regency between AS and VAN...



The “Triple Goddess” Gullveig as represented in this depiction upon ancient Black Sea pottery... Note the flames, weapons of war and symbols of peace/treaty (Food and Drink offerings)... Odin/Wotan's hounds stand astride the Goddess and two Serpents protect her.

FOOT NOTES:

1 this concept was known anciently as Weirgelt/Wergild (amongst the Teutons/Saxons/Norse) also Afrád Gjálfa; it is known as Restitution in modern common-law, or Paying Your Debt to Society in present vernacular. Simply put, it was a payment exacted upon an individual (or group) who committed a crime or injustice against another individual (or group).

2 specifically, a position in the reign of Asgard. This point has been accounted for in the previous chapter.

3 The more liberally translated Bellows Edda, for the same stanzas of Voluspa, validate this same idea—even going so far as the blaming of the abduction of Freya as one specific motive for this war:

23.

**On the host his spear | did Othin hurl,
Then in the world | did war first come;
The wall that girdled | the gods was broken,
And the field by the warlike | Wanes was trodden.**

24.

**Then sought the gods | their assembly-seats,
The holy ones, | and council held,
Whether the gods | should tribute give,
Or to all alike | should worship belong.**

25.

**Then sought the gods | their assembly-seats,
The holy ones, | and council held,
To find who with venom | the air had filled,
Or had given Oð's bride | to the giants' brood.**

[From this, could we also conclude that Loki intervened in the pending marriage of Odin-Oð & Freya? That Loki perhaps was maliciously working against a formal union of Aesir & Vanir, prior to the “First of Wars?”]

4..specifically, the revenge-driven, magical-deception, and vile rape of the Giantess Rindr/Rind...